



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### MANY ENEMIES ATTACK OYSTERS

Already beset by a host of mortal enemies, the oyster has two more now to be added to the lists of its foes, according to a report to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Anomia and Crepidula, two genera of mollusks, are the newcomers to the lists. These marine battlers attack infant oysters at the "spat" stage, when the latter have first formed an attachment to the object which is to be their future residence--a rock, cluster of shells, old bicycle tire, discarded boot, or whatever.

"In addition to their traditional and, possibly, deadliest enemies, the starfish--of which the setting is fortunately very light this year--and drills these two mollusks are killing spat in large numbers in the waters of Long Island Sound," it is reported by Victor L. Loosanoff, Director of the Service Biological Laboratory at Milford, Connecticut.

Also, says the Service biologist, large numbers of ctenophores, commonly called "sea walnuts", "are thought to be responsible for the sharp decrease of oyster larvae.

In the free-swimming stage the oyster larvae are a favorite food of many aquatic forms, including other oysters. After the spat is securely anchored to an object and the oyster begins to build a limey shell about itself, it is attacked by a host of enemies and is harrassed with many unfavorable conditions.

In later stages of its development aquatic creatures armed with drills, suction pumps, crushers, and other implements of warfare, prey upon the oyster.

Other enemies of the oyster are conchs, mussels, boring sponges, and boring clams. All of these enemies are a menace to the growth and survival of oysters, causing heavy losses each year. Various methods have been developed to eradicate some of these pests, and these methods are now being used commercially toward their destruction.

The elements of nature sometimes combine to destroy whole beds of oysters. In the springtime, freshets carry large quantities of fresh water over the beds. This lowers the saltiness of the water, often proving fatal to the oysters in the vicinity. Freshets also scatter large volumes of mud and silt over the beds, the debris depriving the oysters of oxygen and destroying large quantities of them.

Man also has been responsible for depleting oyster resources by overfishing the beds. In addition, municipal and trade wastes have polluted the water over some beds so that the oysters on them have been made unfit for use, and in some cases the oysters have been killed.